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THE OLD NORSE HÁVAMÁL IN MODERN NORWEGIAN FOLK SONG.

For students of Old Norse literature it is of great interest to note how the different mythical and heroic legends contained in the Poetic Edda continued to live in folk song long after the Edda had been compiled. O. N. poetry was essentially epic, rather than lyric. The ancient Norsemen seldom gave full expression to their emotions. They were not a lyric people. They were, however, extremely well versed in the art of narration. Therefore, O. N. literature reached its highest development in epic poetry and in narrative prose. At the close of the O. N. period, however, a delightful literature of folk song developed. The legends contained in the Elder Edda became familiar themes which were treated in many different ways according to folk conception. The O. N. alliterative verse was hardly suited for song. The end rhyme instead of the alliterative was, on the other hand, adopted in the folk song together with the refrain (*stev*), which was used either at the end or both in the middle and at the end of each verse. The '*stev*' generally indicated either the theme or the general atmosphere of the poem. O. N. poetry was probably never sung, at least, never in the modern sense of the word. The folk song, on the other hand, was never delivered without an actual melody which had its origin in and was from the very beginning connected with the poem. O. N. poetry was, therefore, moulded over into a new form to meet these new conditions with the inevitable variation in motif to which all folk literature is subject. Together with the song developed the folk dance which plays such an important roll in the history of the Scandinavian people. The Scandinavian folk dance reaches its fullest development upon the Faroe Islands. There are fifteen folk songs, accompanied by dancing, on the Faroe Islands today all of which treat the life and adventures of the great O. N. hero, Sigurd

Favnesbane. In Norway and Denmark Thor lays and Odin lays appear in folk song in a most interesting form. 'Torsvisen' was sung up to 1870 in Jutland. The Norwegian form was taken down in writing about the year 1750. Both the Norwegian and the Danish ballads go back to an original version, written in Norway at least as early as the year 1400, which describes how Thor got his hammer back, his journey to Jotunheim and his disguising himself as the bride, Freya, just as in the famous *Þrymskviða* of the Elder Edda. The modern versions show, of course, variations according to modern conceptions. Other lays of the Elder Edda appear in folk song, one of the most interesting of which is evidently a reflection of the famous ethical poem of O. N. literature, the *Hávamál*. This lay came to my attention in an edition of folk songs published by Hulda Garborg,* Oslo 1903, with an introduction, written in the 'landsmaal', concerning folk song in Scandinavia. This song, entitled "*Aka paa isen haale*", the editor says is very well suited to "*bandadansen*". "*Bandadansen*" in the 'landsmaal' is the Dano-Norwegian "*Kjædedansen*" or ring-dance in which the participants form a ring by clasping hands and all join in the refrain as a united chorus. The song is written in a dialect of Western Norway, with 7 verses of 8 lines each. The 'stev' is supplied by Ivar Aasen, the great father of dialect study in Norway. The poem reads as follows:

*Norske Folkeskrifter Nr. 8.

Norske folkevisor. B. I.

Med ei utgreiding um visedansen av

Hulde Garborg. Oslo, 1903.

Aka paa isen haale.

Stev av Ivar Aasen.

1. Aka paa isen haale
med uskodd øyk og kaat,
beita i stormen stride
med styrelause baat,
renna i kapp med reinen,

um raasi er tung og vaat:
det maa ein galning vera,
som so vil fara aat.

2. Ganga og gjera seg fager
og fara so fint og smaatt,
løyna sitt rette lynde,
til maalet fyrst er naatt,
gjeva deg gode voner
og svika deg sidan braatt:
det hev eg høyrst so ymse
skal vera kvende-haatt.
3. Ganga og gjera seg smeikjen
og fria tidt og traatt,
freista dei arme vækjer
til baade stort og smaatt,
lata deim sidan fara
og ha deim til glis og laatt:
det hev eg høyrst so ymse
skal vera karmanns-haatt.
4. Ganga so byrg og krøsa
og skifta sin hug kvar dag,
kappast um største stasen
og kaupa av alle slag,
lata ein annan syta
for enden paa slikt eit jag:
det hev eg høyrst so ymse
skal vera kvende-lag.
5. Ganga so bratt og skrøyta
og laast vera høv og hag,
sitja i drikkarstemna
og sumla natt og dag,
koma so heim og dundra

og truga med hogg og slag:
det hev eg høyrte so ymse
skal vera karmanns-lag.

6. Endaa lyt eg no segja:
der er so ymse slag,
Raakar ein paa det gode,
so ser ein eit anna drag;
møter det gode hjarta
eit hjarta med same lag:
ja, daa er der ljose voner
som sol paa ein sumardag.

7. Ja, naar det rette møtast,
so fær det sitt rette lag.
Trutt paa vegen dei fylgjast
alt utan kiv og klag.
Ungdom og venleik vika,
men hjarta slør friske slag;
kjøleiken held sin varme
og varer til siste dag.

The first five verses of the poem reveal the falseness of both women and men in relation to each other. 'Such is the heart of woman, such is the heart of man.' The revelation of woman's inner nature is met with as equally a convincing argument that man's nature is fundamentally no better. In the last two verses of the poem, however, an optimistic tone is assumed in contrast to the prevailing pessimistic sentiment with which the song opened. Here at the close we hear of the ideal union of two loving hearts and of the enduring quality of true love.

There are several verses in this poem which remind one very vividly of certain verses in the *O. N. Hávamál*. In fact the first verse, which seems to be used as a text for the sentiment expressed in the whole poem, is almost a literal translation of verse 90 in the *Hvm.* (Sophus Bugge. *Norroen Fornkvæði*.

Christiania, 1867). Previous to v. 90 in the Hvm. Odin has spoken of those things which one should not trust. One of these things is a maiden's word: v. 84. In this verse he speaks about the fickleness of woman and in verse 90 he resumes the subject, comparing the love of a false woman to driving an unshod and frisky colt upon the slippery ice or to sailing without a rudder in a raging storm or to a lame man's trying to catch the deer upon the mountain where the snow has begun to melt.

Hvm. 90.

Sva er friþr qvenna
 þeirra er flát hyggja,
 sem aki io obryddom
 a isi hálom,
 teitom tvevetrom
 oc se tamr illa,
 eþa i byr óþum
 beiti stiorlauso,
 eþa scyli halltr henda
 hrein i þáfialli.

If we compare this verse in the Hvm. with verse 1 of the folk song we see that the folk song is almost a literal translation of the O. N. There are three similes involved: namely, that of 1) the colt, 2) the ship, 3) the rein-deer.

1) The simile of the colt is literally preserved. *tvevetrom* and *oc se tamr illa* are omitted, being only extensions of *teitom*. med uskodd øyk og kaat=Hvm. io obryddom.....teitom.

2) The simile of the rudderless ship is also literally preserved.

beita=Hvm. beiti
 i stormen stride=Hvm. i byr óþum.
 med styrelause baat=Hvm. stiorlauso.

3) The simile of the lame man trying to catch the deer upon the mountain where the snow has begun to melt has assumed a slightly different form in the folk song. Here the picture is that of a man running a race with the deer when the race-course is heavy and wet (viz., from the melting snow).

renna i kapp med=race. Hvm. scyli hend=(as if he) should try to catch. um raasi er tung og vaat=if the race-course is heavy and wet. Hvm. i þafialli=on the mountain where the snow has begun to *thaw*.

The last two lines of the first verse of the folk song:

det maa ein galning vera,
som so vil fara aat.

seem to have no counterpart in the verse in question (90) in the Hvm. But in the preceding verse of the Hvm. (89), after concluding the enumeration of those things which no man ought to trust, Odin says, as a warning to all men: 'let no man be so secure that he trust any of these things'.

Hvm. 89.

(last two lines)

verpit maþr sva trygggr,
at þesso trui þllo.

This seems to be the same sentiment as that expressed in the last two lines of this first verse of the folk song: 'he must be a mad man who would do this' (Cf. the three similes equivalent to trusting a woman's word).

The second verse of the folk song now proceeds to delineate the character of woman. This theme is suggested in the Hvm., v. 90, the first two lines:

sva er friþr qvenna
þeirra er flát hyggja.

'such is love of women who think falsely'. The same theme is treated in this second verse of the folk song although no formal introduction to it is given as in the Hvm. The theme itself, however, is identical in both poems. When Odin, v. 84, first speaks of not trusting a woman's word he gives as his reason for this mistrust the fact that women are so fickle: 'because their hearts are fashioned upon a whirling wheel and fickleness fills their breasts'.

Hvm. 84.

Meyiar orðom
 scyli manngi trua,
 ne því er qvedr kona;
 þvíat a hverfanda hveli
 voro þeim hiorto scöpuð
 brigð i briost um lagit.

This is the general theme of verse 2 in the folk song, though developed in a much more modern atmosphere. Woman's fickleness is portrayed much more in detail and much more definitely than in the Hvm. It is, in fact, a delineation of the modern vain and petty woman.

Folk Song.

V. 2.

Go and make themselves pretty,
 Act so dainty and sweet,
 Hide their true feelings,
 Till their goal is reached,
 Give thee fair hopes,
 But deceive thee then suddenly:
 That I have often heard
 Is *woman's* way of doing.

In verse 3 of the folk song a retort is made to the accusations (heaped upon woman's head) in verse 2 by an equally potent arraignment of the weaknesses of man. After Odin in the Hvm. has given woman her full share of blame he becomes (v. 91) very frank about his own sex. In order to do woman justice he feels he must not fail to mention the faults of men, who are likewise not without deceit. He says:

Now I shall speak openly,
 For I know both man and woman:
 The heart of man is fickle toward women,
 We talk fairest when we think most falsely;
 That deceives even the heart of the wise.

Hvm. 91.

Bert ec nu mēli,
þviat ec þēði veit,
brigðr er karla hugr konom;
þa ver fegrst melom,
er ver flast hyggiom,
þat tēlir horsca hugi.

In the very next verse Odin tells how a man is to win a woman's love. This, though very practical advice for a young Viking, is from the modern view point not altogether creditable to the character of either the young man or the woman. Flattery and wealth are the chief means of success: 'he who would have a woman's love must use fair words and offer money; he must praise the form of the fair maid. He will get her who woos her'.

Hvm. 92.

Fagrt scal mēla
oc fę bióþa
sa er vill fiolds ast fá,
liki leyfa
ens liosa mans;
sa fęr er friár.

These two verses (91, 92) in the Hvm. form the basis of verse 3 in the folk song, the general theme of which is the deceitful and dishonorable conduct of men towards women. But the folk song is much more modern in its denunciation of man's immorality than was Odin in the Hvm. There is a distinct accusation here which was only general in the Hvm. The folk song says that men get into the good graces of women, then tempt the poor creatures and after they have seduced them, abandon them with laughter and scorn. The generalities of the Hvm. are particularized with telling effect.

Folk Song.

V. 3.

Go and get in their graces,
 Woo often and obstinate,
 Tempt the poor things
 To both small and great sins,
 Then let them go
 With scorn and laughter;
 That I have often heard
 Is *man's* way of doing.

The next two verses in the folk song are merely extensions of verses 2 and 3 respectively. Verse 4 is a retort to the accusations made against man in verse 3 and is a continuation of the same theme treated in verse 2. Verse 5 is a retort to the accusations made against woman in verse 4 and is a continuation of the same theme treated in verse 3. There are no new elements introduced from the Hvm., the old ones being merely extended and diversified. The poem here assumes more of the nature of a 'flýting', in which the vituperation of the other sex seems to be the main object. But the enumeration of these faults and vices brings the reader more and more out of the medieval world of the O. N. Hvm., into the modern home of an immoral husband and whimsical wife. No such detailed account of woman's weakness for finery, or her extravagance and her whimsicalness, nor of a drunken husband's brutal conduct, as portrayed here, could be found in O. N. poetry. This is a reflection of modern life which might be characteristic of Holberg but not of the Hvm.

Folk Song.

V. 4.

Be deceitful and whimsical,
 And change her mind every day,
 Vie in the highest finery,
 And buy of every kind,
 Make someone else lament

As the result of such conduct:
That I have often heard
Is *woman's* nature.

V. 5.

Be so quick to brag,
Claim he is fit and skilled,
Sit in a drinking bout
And guzzle night and day,
Come home then and thunder
And threaten with cuffs and blows:
That I have often heard
Is *man's* nature.

With the 5th verse this spirit of vituperation ceases and the poem, in the two concluding verses, assumes a positive and optimistic tone. The faults of both sexes suggested by Odin's practical wisdom in the Hvm., are found true, but true only of certain people in the world. When one pure heart meets another in true love these faults disappear. The fair hopes which were before deceived (V. 2) are now realized. When the right soul meets its mate then the course of love is as it should be. Youth and beauty perish but true love endures even unto the end.

Folk Song.

V. 6.

Yet now I hear it said:
There are many different kinds,
If one makes a happy find
One sees things differently,
When one good heart meets
Another of the same kind,
Yes, then there are hopes as bright
As the sun upon a summer's day.

V. 7.

Yes, when the right hearts meet,
Then love takes its right course.
They follow each other confidently
Upon the way, without quarrel or lament.
Youth and beauty may pass away,
But the heart-beats still are warm;
Love keeps its warmth and lasts
Even unto the last day.

In these last two verses we see a pleasant and affecting conclusion of the folk song. This natural outburst of affection between man and wife, characteristic of the healthy and sound spirit of folk song in general, does not accord with the selfish and deceitful love which Odin in the Hvm. ascribes to men and women. This quality of natural affection is the most distinctively folk phrase of the poem and serves most effectively in bringing out the difference between the two types of love. The spirit of these last two strophes is also in keeping with the modern conception of life so vividly portrayed in the preceding stanzas. In fact the whole poem is modern in its thought and in most of the pictures which it presents. The only actual O. N. elements are (1) the suggestion of the general theme, (2) the first verse (in imitation of the Hvm. V. 90), (3) The fickleness of woman in verse 2 (based upon the Hvm. V. 84), (4) the deceitful attitude of men towards women in verse 3 (based upon the Hvm. V. V. 91, 92). The general theme, although suggested by the O. N. Hvm., is developed in the light of modern Scandinavian life and thought. The further we progress from verse 1 the more evident this becomes. After verse 3 the poem is absolutely modern, without a suggestion of O. N. influence save the mere theme itself which one never would suspect of having an O. N. origin if one were not already acquainted with the first three verses of the poem. Only the structure of the poem, therefore, rests upon an O. N. basis. Its spirit and the development of the theme, on the other hand,

are entirely modern. This is an interesting example of the survival of O. N. poetry in modern Norwegian folk song.

But the survival of this folk song, valuable as it is in itself, may throw light also, as Professor Goebel suggests to me, upon the original relation to each other of the various stanzas in the *Hávamál*. The question of the composition of the *Hvm.* has long been contested. No other poem in the Elder Edda is of such a composite nature or contains so many interpolated stanzas. The general division of the poem into five parts, which Karl Müllenhoff has suggested, has been almost universally accepted. Müllenhoff's division is as follows:

1. Spruchgedicht. 1—78. 80.
2. Odin's Beispiel. 79. 81—102.
3. Odin's Beispiel. 103—110.
4. Loddfáfnismál. 111—137. 164.
5. Rúnatal. 138—145.
6. Ljóðatal. 146—163.

Finnur Jónsson (*Den Islanske Litteraturs Historie tilligemed den Oldnorske*) says of this arrangement: 'han har vist fundet det rigtige forhold'.

It is evident from the analysis of the O. N. elements upon which this modern Norwegian folk song is based that we are concerned here with Odin's first 'Beispiel' or the well known story of Billing's daughter. These O. N. elements in the folk song are based upon V. V. 84, 90, 91 and 92 of the *Hvm.* all of which according to Müllenhoff, belong to the story of Billing's daughter. It is striking that in his analysis of this story, Müllenhoff (*Deutsche Altertumskunde*. B. V. S. 261ff. Berlin, 1908.) brings V. 91 and V. 84 in direct connection with each other on the ground that they are the original verses from which the story of Billing's daughter was developed. V. 91 serves as a retort to V. 84: 'im unmittelbarsten, stärksten gegensatze zu V. 84, als trutz-und gegenstrophe dazu, ist V. 91 gedichtet, wo einer nach seiner kenntnis sich offen dahin glaubt erklären zu müssen, dass die schuld der unzuverlässigkeit und

treulosigkeit viel mehr auf seite der männer sei'. This is exactly the same condition of things which we find in the Norwegian folk song in question. The deceitful attitude of men towards women in verse 3 of the folk song (based upon the Hvm. V.V. 91, 92.) is a direct retort to the accusations of fickleness made against woman in verse 2 (based upon the Hvm. V. 84.). In these two strophes of the Hvm. (84, 91.) we have, therefore, (according to Müllenhoff) the original nucleus from which was developed the whole story of Odin's personal love-experience with Billing's daughter. All other strophes are either extensions or later interpolations of these two original strophes. V. 90 also, which forms the basis for the first verse of the folk song and suggests its general theme, Müllenhoff places directly after V. 84, bringing both verses in direct connection with each other, just as is done in V.V. 1 and 2. of the folk song. Müllenhoff's theory is, further, that the story of Billing's daughter must have existed before the time of the composition of the original strophes, 84 and 91. These two strophes were later added as a sort of introduction to the story in question. Both of Odin's 'Beispiele' are illustrations of some ethical principle taken from his own personal experience in life. The question raised here is *false love on the part of woman*, V. 84, which the story of Billing's daughter is used to illustrate.

If we note Müllenhoff's arrangement and eliminate the interpolated and extended verses we have not only the nucleus from which the story of Billing's daughter was developed but also the O. N. basis of the Norwegian folk song. His arrangement is as follows:

79. 81-83. 84. 90. 85-87. 89. 88. 91. 92-95.

V. 79 serves as a mere transition-strophe from the previous theme, treating the attainment of wealth (fé), to this new theme which involves the question of love as exemplified by the story of Billing's daughter. V. 80 is misplaced and should follow directly after V. 77, in that it serves as a mere conventional ending to the previous theme and has nothing to do with the story in question. V.V. 81-83 as well as V.V. 85-90 are later

interpolations. V.V. 92-95 are extensions of V. 91. This leaves only verses 84 and 91 which, as we have seen, form the basis of the Norwegian folk song. The order of verses developed from the first original strophe, 84, (79. 81-83. 84. 90. 85-87. 89. 88.) is an arrangement which Müllenhoff contends has its literary precedent in the *Völuspá* (S. 235f.) and especially in the *Grimnismál* (S. 236f.) and therefore these verses probably did not exist without a written original. But the verses extended from the second original strophe, 91, which serves as a retort to V. 84, probably owe their origin solely to verbal tradition. The original strophe, 84, was at least partly cited as a proverb by a slave (*verkthræll*) in Greenland in the year 1025. It seems quite probable that not only the original strophe, 84, but also the whole story of Billing's daughter which was developed from it existed as oral tradition in Scandinavia.*

*Compare Bugge's opinion as to the origin of the 'Odinic fragments' on the Shetland Islands, (*Studier over de nordiske Gude=og Heltesagns Oprindelse*. Sophus Bugge. Christiania. 1881-1889. 1, 312. Foot note.)

"Vigfusson (*Corp. poet.* 1, LXXIV) remarks: 'The discoveries of 'Odinic fragments' in the Shetlands are utterly illusory—. Let us remember, putting aside all other possibilities, that Resenius' printed text, with a Latin translation, has been accessible for more than two hundred years.' I cannot share Vigfusson's opinion. The poetic form of the Shetland verses, their mode of expression, and especially the fact that the conception, to which they give expression, stands midway between the conception in the *Hvm.* and that of the orthodox Christian religion seem to me to be a proof of the fact that they are genuine folk productions and that they originated before Resenius' translation of the *Hvm.* appeared, from an altered form of either the strophe in question in the *Hvm.* or of a strophe very much akin to it. That such a strophe in an altered form could have been preserved in the mouths of the people up to the present time, is not any more remarkable than that magic verses, coinciding almost word for word with the 'Merseburgerspruch' written in the 10th century, should have been familiar to the people in many localities even up to the present time. Besides, we have many witnesses to the fact that poetic fragments of a very early origin have been preserved in the mouths of the people on the Shetland Islands. Finally, I call attention to the fact that the poems *Thrymskviða*, *Grógaldur*, *Fjölsvinnsmál* have been worked over into ballads with rhymed strophes."

Just as the many stories about Sigurd Favnesbane lived on in the folk songs upon the Faroe Islands so this story of Odin's personal experience with Billing's daughter may well have found its echo in the folk song of Norway. This seems all the more probable from the fact that the two original strophes (84, 91) in the Hvm. (according to Müllenhoff) which lead up to this story are the very same as those which form the basis of the Norwegian folk song. The immorality and selfishness of Odin's love would naturally find no ultimate sanction in folk philosophy. The naiveté and naturalness of folk conception would be instinctively repulsed by such a doctrine of life as Odin advances. In the story of Billing's daughter Odin seeks by numerous devices to seduce the object of his passion, but in each instance is cleverly repulsed. In the last two verses of the folk song the spirit of natural repulsion for immorality corresponds exactly to the spirit in which Billing's daughter treats the immoral advances on the part of Odin. This lends additional evidence to the contention that the folk song is a survival of the story of Billing's daughter. The folk dance was often used as a sort of court in which wicked or immoral deeds were condemned and punished. If a man was found guilty of some misdemeanor two of his companions would seize him and drag him to the dance where he was compelled to hear verses sung telling the story of his shame and making him an object of scorn and ridicule. Such a punishment was not uncommon on the Faroe Islands. Especially in the life of the youth the folk dance with its song was a strong moral factor. Through these stories told in the folk song he became acquainted with the glorious deeds of his forefathers, learned a deeper love for his native land and for his home and came to a better appreciation of those virtues which the folk song upheld as the highest ideals in life; namely, courage, honesty, fidelity, friendship, and love even unto death. But shame was heaped upon the head of the cowardly, the dishonest and the impure. The folk song, therefore, was a distinctly moral production. Such a theme as the story of Billing's daughter would naturally find a decidedly

strong moral repulse in the folk song. This explains the positive and optimistic tone in the last two verses of the folk song in direct contrast to the prevailing pessimistic tone with which the song opened. The story of Billing's daughter is, therefore, indirectly reflected in these last two strophes, in that the folk song here, in contrast to Odin's immorality, gives expression to the natural and sound philosophy of life, which is the character-giving element of folk song in general.

From the foregoing analysis, therefore, there can be no doubt but that this folk song, 'Aka paa isen haale', owes its origin directly to the O.N. Hvm. and also to the same verbal tradition (according to Müllenhoff) from which was developed the story of Billing's daughter or Odin's first 'Beispiel,' as it exists in its present written form in the Elder Edda. Further, this analysis not only confirms Müllenhoff's theory as to the original sequence of strophes in Odin's first 'Beispiel' but it also throws new and very important light upon the continued life of the Poetic Edda in the folk song of Scandinavia.

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Kansas University, April 9, 1910.